

ABRAHAM LINCOLN

REV. ALEXANDER H. LEO

21/10/19
+2

ABRAHAM LINCOLN

Military Order of the Loyal Legion of the United States

COMMANDERY OF THE STATE OF PENNSYLVANIA

MEMORIAL MEETING

FEBRUARY 12, 1919

1919

Commandery of the State of Pennsylvania

FEBRUARY 12, 1919

ABRAHAM LINCOLN PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES

MARCH 4, 1861, TO APRIL 15, 1865

Born February 12, 1809, in Hardin (La Rue) Co., Kentucky
Assassinated April 14, 1865; died April 15, 1865, at Washington, D. C.
Enrolled by Special Resolution April 16, 1865

CHAPLAIN ALEXANDER H. LEO

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2010 with funding from
The Institute of Museum and Library Services through an Indiana State Library LSTA Grant

ABRAHAM LINCOLN

BY COMPANION ALEXANDER H. LEO,
CHAPLAIN OF THE COMMANDERY

It is very fitting that we should meet tonight, as is our custom every year, to pay loyal tribute to that colossal figure who stands at the beginning of our organization and benignantly looks down upon us through the years.

I would not presume to think, gentlemen, that I could bring to you anything new in the matchless life of our great American nobleman. Most of you saw him in life, saw him under the stress and strain of the mightiest tasks ever given the leaders of men. Many of you were personally acquainted with the Great Emancipator, and so I would not attempt to do other than merely to give vent to that warm appreciation we all feel for the greatest American that ever adorned the pages of our history.

Mr. Lincoln is more and more, as the years come by, the ideal American, the ideal man, stimulating the character-building forces of the youth of all the world and adding encouragement to all who are willing to sit at his feet and learn of him. I find no other that compares with him, except by contrast. He seems to stand alone, he does stand alone, the great Human, vibrant with the warmth of a human touch that reaches down the years and makes him seem as near to me, who never saw him, as though I had known and loved him with a favored intimacy.

He came of humble but heroic stock. They were of the rugged pioneers in an unbroken country; and that is sufficient recommendation, when we know the courage with which they persisted, in spite of the most cruel privations. Once answering some inquiry regarding his antecedents, he modestly replied: "The short and simple annals of the poor."

It is true, he was born in a log hut, but I doubt if any other single abode of man, from royal palace down, has ever more keenly awakened the emotions of the human heart, and it is consistently true that a man may so live, so give his life, that the whole world will soon wear beaten pathways to the humble manger, or log hut, where he was born. The

ALEXANDER HENRY LEO

Eligibility for membership derived as the second son of Henry F. Leo, First Sergeant 118th Pennsylvania Infantry, August 13, 1862; discharged for promotion March 17, 1864.

First Lieutenant 118th Pennsylvania Infantry March 17, 1864; Captain November 6, 1864; honorably discharged June 1, 1865; died October 22, 1883.

stateliest mansion could scarcely claim any inspiration in itself, but Lincoln's little cabin stands resplendent in a simple halo because a great man's life shines back upon it.

The unlettered lad, who met poverty with a cheerful front, who would not lie, nor be a party to any questionable transaction, who was kind to animals and persuaded others against cruelty, showed many of the traits that make for noble manhood, and any boy who could show such thrilling interest in the "continued stories" of an old dictionary, gave fair promise of the man of choicest and most beautiful diction in the English language.

He was very unprepossessing in personal appearance. He was far from handsome. Nothing about him was so attractive that men should desire him. None of the lines that lend themselves to symmetry adorned his physical stature, but he stood six feet four square in the noblest impulses that ever actuated the human heart.

He was not an educated man, if diplomas and doctorates and the high marks of the schools alone indicate such. Any child today in our free public schools receives more training in a single year than was available to Abraham Lincoln all the years of his youth, and long before he was twenty-one he was too big to go to school and never afterward was opportunity presented to him.

The world of the intellect is by far the biggest world we have to live in. The mind that discovers within itself the stamp of the Image Divine; that feels the glow of that spark of genius the Creator gives to mark the human superior to every other creature; that mind will not stay long within the confines of its accidental barriers. Such a mind will build a college out of, or into, a woodpile. Such a brain will find a university library in the grass, the flowers, the fields, the forests, the birds, the stars and all of nature's open books. Abraham Lincoln did that. He had access to very few books, but he got out of them much more than was ever written into them. This is Education. Abraham Lincoln was eminently an educated man.

He was not eloquent, if the polish of rhetoric makes the marks of eloquence, but back of this rugged figure, back of his simple speech, couched as it was in the strongest, purest diction ever used by mortal, there were the force and power of the man that held his hearers till the speaker glowed with beauty and force almost superhuman.

His speech was so simple, so familiar, and his illustrations of the most homely sort, and absolutely free from any element of self-consciousness. There was not the faintest suggestion of an unhuman trait in all his outstanding genius. He arose from the depths of utter poverty to the dazzling heights of unexampled fame by the sheer energy of his own massive mind. The extreme modesty and simplicity of the man contrasted greatly with the stately grandeur and elegance of Douglass, and he could bear rebuff and defeat with an equanimity Douglass never pos-

sessed. "What matters it," he once said, "who wins now, if in the end right triumphs?" This was always the spirit of the man.

It is not now hard to see that Mr. Lincoln's speeches and debates with Senator Douglass split the Democratic Party on the slavery question and insured his nomination and the success of the Republican Party. But it seems incredible that the man who went out and bought a ten-cent beefsteak for his breakfast and carried it home himself was the next day nominated for the Presidency of the United States, but such was the unaffected simplicity of a great man. For years people looked upon him as a most delightful and entertaining humorist and then discovered him to be a most profound philosopher, making humor serve as a lifesaver and timesaver to a weary, overburdened executive. He told so many witty stories and said so many striking things it is hard to select any that are more unique than others, but I should not fail to call to your attention the exquisite pathos found in the Gettysburg address, the second inaugural and the Bixby letter. Speaking of the severance of the Union, he said, "What use to me would be a second term if I had no country?" and he gave utterance to a doctrine usually credited to a present-day exponent of democracy when he said, "No man is good enough to govern another man without that other man's consent." Here is an example of his power in making a strong background for fact, "Repeal the Missouri Compromise, repeal all compromises, repeal the Declaration of Independence, repeal all history; you cannot repeal human nature." And this just tribute he paid to woman, "If all that has been said in praise of woman were applied to the women of America it would not do them justice for their conduct during this war. God bless the women of America!"

They say he was not a religious man. That is true, if being a religious man means the front seat in the synagogue and a loud profession of one's creed. It was perhaps unfortunate that there was no church close at hand in his youthful days that might give outlet to the devout expression developing within his great soul and go hand in hand with that rapidly expanding intellect. Most students of his character, however, are agreed that he was the sanest, most devoutly religious, of all the leaders of his day. He hated sham and hypocrisy. Once he rather facetiously remarked that he had little regard for the man who had to erect a lightning rod to protect a guilty conscience from an offended God.

This man of broad intelligence, high and noble sentiments, unquestioned sincerity, keen foresight, firm judgment, warm sympathy, boundless patriotism, with malice toward none and charity for all; this is the MAN we celebrate.

“And so he came,
From prairie cabin, up to capitol,
One fair ideal led our Chieftain on.
Forevermore he burned to do his deed
With the fine stroke and gesture of a King.
He built the rail pile as he built the State,
Pouring his splended strength through every blow,
The conscience of him testing every stroke,
To make his deed the measure of a man.

So came the Captain of the mighty heart;
And when the step of earthquake shook the house,
Wresting the rafters from their ancient hold,
He held the ridge-pole up and spiked again
The rafters of the home. He held his place—
Held the long purpose like a growing tree—
Held on through blame and faltered not at praise,
And when he fell in whirlwind, he went down
As when a kingly cedar, green with boughs,
Goes down with a great shout upon the hills,
And leaves a lonesome place against the sky.”

